

# UNLIMITED...

## UK's cultural legacy 'Unlimited' sets precedent with disability-led selection panel

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'Unlimited', the three year UK commissioning programme supported by the National Lottery through Arts Council England and Creative Scotland which supports disabled artists in developing and showcasing ambitious and high quality work across the UK and internationally, has announced the recruitment of a selection panel with over 75% of quality candidates elected being disabled people.

The 13 panellists include high profile disabled artists, and individuals from Southbank Centre and British Council, and will be chaired by Ruth Gould, Artistic Director for DaDaFest. Out of the panellists, eight will have overall responsibility deciding which artworks will be commissioned, with the others offering their expertise across the entire Unlimited programme including supporting and advising artists on producing commissions. Arts Council England and Creative Scotland will also be represented as an observer.

Unlimited will not only help disabled artists develop their practice and encourage the development of new relationships and collaborations with producers, venues and promoters, but will also increase distribution of disabled artists' extraordinary work (through digital means and touring up to an international level), affording greater opportunities for audiences to see high quality accessible art.

And with Arts Council England, Creative Scotland, DaDaFest, Disability Arts Online, British Council, and Southbank Centre already on board as key delivery partners, Unlimited is set to become a cultural legacy in the making, not only transforming the perception of disability, but also embedding disabled artists within the cultural sector across the UK & internationally.

Jo Verrent, Senior Producer and non-voting panellist for Unlimited says:

'I'm astounded at the diversity, quality and quantity of people who applied to be part of the Unlimited selection panel. The final decision was a tough one, however we are now confident with our newly appointed arts-centred, disability-led panel, that this will undoubtedly ensure Unlimited as a legacy in the making. Unlimited always attracts high quality art applications created by extraordinary disabled artists, and this makes our decision making process all the more challenging.'

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Carole McFadden, Unlimited voting panellist and Program Manager Theatre and Dance for the British Council says:

'Judging by the breadth and range of experience from potential advisory panellists applying to Unlimited, the previous 2012 Unlimited legacy clearly left an indelible mark on the UK arts and disability scene. We need great people like these to take these conversations and great art forward.'

Maggie Maxwell, Acting Portfolio Manager, Audience Development, Equalities and Participation, Creative Scotland, said:

'The 2012 Unlimited programme saw ground-working work being produced to great acclaim in the UK and internationally. We are sure that the 2014 commissions will have equal impact. Given the range of talented artists across Scotland and the UK the judging panel will have a tough task deciding on the final commissions.'

Sarah Pickthall, Unlimited voting panellist and Independent Artist says:

'I'm delighted to join the Unlimited selection panel. I'm particularly excited to be part of a process that supports the research and development of new ideas from a wealth of disabled artists across England and Scotland and to see the next phase of the Unlimited programme work its very particular magic.'

The voting panellists who will decide which artwork is commissioned include: Wendy Martin, Head of Performance and Dance for Southbank Centre, Carole McFadden, Programme Manager Theatre & Dance for British Council, Caroline Bowditch, independent artist from Scotland, Sarah Pickthall, independent coach, artist and curator, Marc Steene, Executive Director Pallant House, Cathy Mager, Artist, Aaron Williamson, independent Artist, and Chenine Bhathena, Senior Cultural Strategy Officer, Greater London Authority.

The non-voting panellists who are steering the whole Unlimited project as well as advising artists in their applications are: Tony Heaton, CEO Shape, Manick Govinda, Head of artists' advisory services Artsadmin, and Jo Verrent, Senior Producer Unlimited.

The national delivery partners for the Unlimited commissioning programme, Shape and Artsadmin, were awarded a £1.5 million grant supported by the National Lottery through Arts Council England at the end of 2013. Creative Scotland is an additional funding partner through National Lottery funds.

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They launched the Unlimited website [www.weareunlimited.org.uk](http://www.weareunlimited.org.uk) via their delivery team which includes disability industry heavyweights Jo Verrent and Ruth Gould.

## ENDS

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Arts Council England invested in Shape, the disability-led arts charity, and arts producing organisation Artsadmin to support disabled artists through a programme of commissions, running a complementary mentoring programme between 2013 and 2016.

The programme will support disabled artists to develop their practice, forming new relationships and collaborations with producers, venues and promoters; it will increase distribution of the work (through touring, including international touring, and digital iterations) affording greater opportunities for audiences to see some of the very the best work available from disabled artists right across the UK and internationally.

Shape is a disability-led arts organisation working to improve access to culture for disabled people by developing opportunities for disabled artists, training cultural institutions to be more open to disabled people, and running participatory arts and development programmes. [www.shapearts.org.uk](http://www.shapearts.org.uk)

Artsadmin is an arts lab for the 21st Century, supporting the creation of new performance, site-specific and interdisciplinary work by the most talented and innovative artists through mentoring, development and producing support. [www.artsadmin.co.uk](http://www.artsadmin.co.uk)

London 2012, the UK Arts Councils and the British Council commissioned 29 ambitious pieces of work by disabled artists. These included:

- Ménagement à Trois, a beautiful study of love, obsession, loneliness and manipulation through dance theatre from award-winning performer Claire Cunningham and choreographer/video artist Gail Sneddon
- MACROPOLIS by Joel Simon and Flickrpix is a light-hearted animated film which tracks the adventures through the city of two toys with impairments, who have been discarded from a factory production line.

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- The Dean Rodney Singers is an international interactive multimedia project which saw the creation of a global band of 72 musicians and dancers. This project was produced by Heart n Soul under the creative guidance of 21 year old artist Dean Rodney, lead singer of The Fish Police.

To register an interest or to make an application to the Unlimited programme before the deadline of Monday 17th February 2014, visit the website: [www.weareunlimited.org.uk](http://www.weareunlimited.org.uk) and Twitter: @weareunltd

## **Jo Verrent, Unlimited Senior Producer:**

Jo Verrent works in arts & culture at strategic levels with national agencies and on the ground with organisations and individuals embedding the belief that diversity adds texture, turning policy into real action. Jo believes that 'different' is delicious not divergent.

2014 sees Jo working as senior producer for the three year Unlimited Commissions programme (working with Shape and Artsadmin) for disabled artists and companies and has previously delivered numerous projects co-creating SHORT CIRCUIT - fusing disability artistry and digital acumen, PUSH ME – film making for The Space (a digital platform created by Arts Council England and BBC) and the national disability and leadership programme, SYNC.

Jo is a Clore fellow, and has won both COSMOPOLITAN's woman of achievement award and her village award for making jam. Jo is partially deaf and has tinnitus. She uses residual hearing, lip reading and sign language.

## **Ruth Gould, Artistic Director for DaDaFest:**

In July 2013 Ruth Gould became the Artistic Director of DaDaFest, and previously was the Chief Executive Officer, since February 2001. Passionate about Disability and Deaf arts celebrated as cultural diversities, Ruth established the festival in 2001. From Liverpool, Ruth initially trained in performance arts, speech and drama at Liverpool Theatre School. In 1988 she undertook further training in School of Creative Arts' Australia becoming the movement and drama teacher, leading to work opportunities in New Zealand and USA.

Ruth is on the Board of Contact Theatre, a Governor of Alder Hey Children's Hospital, and an advisory member for Granada Foundation and Liverpool City Council Tourism and Culture Select Committee.

**DaDaFest** is a leading disability and deaf arts organisation, with a vision to inspire, develop and celebrate talent and excellence in disability and deaf arts.

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The next DaDaFest International festival, based in Liverpool, is happening November- December 2014. [www.dadafest.co.uk](http://www.dadafest.co.uk)

**Arts Council England** champions, develops and invests in artistic and cultural experiences that enrich people's lives. We support a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to digital art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections. Great art and culture inspires us, brings us together and teaches us about ourselves and the world around us. In short, it makes life better. Between 2010 and 2015, we will invest £1.9 billion of public money from government and an estimated £1.1 billion from the National Lottery to help create these experiences for as many people as possible across the country. [www.artscouncil.org.uk](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk)

**Creative Scotland** is the national organisation that funds and supports the development of Scotland's arts, screen and creative industries. Creative Scotland has four objectives: to develop and sustain a thriving environment for the arts, screen and creative industries; to support excellence in artistic and creative practice; to improve access to and participation in, arts and creative activity; and to deliver our services efficiently and effectively. In 2013/14 we will distribute over £100m in funding provided by the Scottish Government and the National Lottery. For further information on Creative Scotland please visit [www.creativescotland.com](http://www.creativescotland.com) Follow us @creativescots and [www.facebook.com/CreativeScotland](https://www.facebook.com/CreativeScotland)